DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 248 FL 016 140

AUTHOR Staton, Jana, Ed.; And Others
TITLE Dialogue, Volume 1, 1982-1983.
INSTITUTION Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 36p.; For volume 2 of Dialogue, see FL 016 141. For related documents, see FL 016 139 and FL 016 208-209.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Dialogue; v1 n1-4 Apr-Aug 1980-83

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Classroom Techniques; Dialogs (Language); *Diaries; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Interpersonal Communication; Newsletters; Research Projects; Second Language Instruction; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Dialogue Journals

ABSTRACT

Volume 1 of the dialogue journal newsletter contains contributions from the editors and teachers concerning the use of dialogue journals as a means of sustained written interaction between students and teachers at all educational levels and in second language and other types of instruction. The information presented includes techniques, ideas, opinions, results, examples, information sources, and other resources for dialogue journal use in education. (MSE)

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DIALOGUE

Volume 1, 1982-1983

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THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL NEWSLETTER

Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect St.,
Washington, D. C. 20007
Contact Jana Staton for Information

Editor: Becky Michael
Volume 1, number 1
April 1982

Dear Friends,

There are so many of you, all trying out dialogue writing in new settings, that I can no longer keep up by personal letter and feel guilty about not sharing more of what you are doing with others. This newsletter is an attempt to remedy the situation. Included you will find brief notes about the Dialogue Journal Project, excerpts from an interview with the original dialogue journal teacher, and tidbits from letters and calls which I have had from all of you.

Your help is needed, though, to make this newsletter successful. Write back and tell us what your experience has been and we will include it in the next edition (to appear as soon as enough of you respond). By sharing our experiences, our insights, our knowledge perhaps we can begin a dialogue of our own. I look forward to hearing from all of you.

Jana Staton
CAL

It's Done! Dialogue Writing as a Communicative Event - Jana Staton, Roger Shuy, Joy Kreeft and Mrs. R.

This report consists of an overview, Volume I, presenting the study purposes, findings and conclusions and implications for writing and for classroom interaction. Eleven research papers (in Volume II) present analyses of language functions, types of conversational discourse which develop, and the effects of private, non-graded, interactive writing on the growth of elaboration, ability to reason about problems, and topic understanding. The teacher's own perspective on the use of dialogue journals in the classroom is presented in the 12th paper of Volume II.

CAL is reproducing both volumes at cost: Vol. I is $8.00, Vol. II is $14.00, but our special discount offer is only $25.00 for both volumes, including prepaid shipping. (If volumes are bought separately, include $1.86 for volume I or $2.59 for volume II to cover shipping and handling.)

Excerpt from an Interview with Leslee Reed, the Original Dialogue Journal Teacher

The following questions and answers are part of an interview that was done with Leslee Reed, the original dialogue journal teacher, in September 1981.

Interviewer: I want to ask you what you get out of journal writing?

Mrs. R.: I don't think I've ever grown so much in my life as I have this year in understanding the problems of different cultures, different races, trying to fit into this pattern of American life..Plus, as a teacher and having taught for a great many years, I'm sometimes so sure when I'm teaching a lesson that it does me good to see sometimes in the journals something that I totally missed. That I have used a cliche or an idiom that literally blocked out everything I taught up to that point. It's like a challenge. It's a puzzle.

Int.:Is it very important for students and teacher to share personal information, that doesn't have much to do with their learning?

Mrs. R.. I think all learning has to take place through a mind that's as unfettered and as open as possible. If we can help to open their minds and unfetter their worries and agonies by sharing or by letting them put them out on paper, then learning can begin.

I think another thing about the dialogue journals which teachers might not realize is the degree to which it allows you to individualize their work. I think now I find that journal writing is sort of the kernel of my teaching. When I sit down to do journals, I am doing a kind of resume of my day, and of each child. For me it .....

(cont. on page 2)

(teacher interview continued)
makes my whole school year flow, because I have a constant finger on the pulse of the children. I know quite accurately what every child is doing and not doing.

Int.: What needs to be said about the journals?

Mrs. R.: I think if I could have... everyone see the love that goes into the journals and not just on my part, but on the children's part too. The love, the respect, the mutuality of goals, the feelings that we develop for each other. It's so worthwhile, it's so good. I just think any teacher who allows herself to get this involved with individuals can't help but be enriched by just learning more about each individual.

New Research Notes

Dialogue Journals with Deaf Students

Jana Staton is now consulting at Gallaudet College, the national college for the deaf in Washington, D. C., to develop dialogue journal writing for deaf students, at both college and precollege levels. Deaf students learn sign language as their first language. written English is a second language for them, and one which they find very difficult to learn, especially when they don't have opportunities to use it in functional situations. Faculty from the English Department and Counseling are interested in trying out dialogue journals and three high school English teachers from the Model Secondary School are already using them with their classes. Research proposals to study the acquisition of English language in dialogue writing are planned, and we would be interested in hearing from teachers who might have already used a dialogue journal with deaf or other communication impaired students.

Language Acquisition - ESL

A research project is now in progress to analyze the acquisition of English in dialogue journal writing. The study focuses on the dialogue writing over one year's time of a sixth grade class of non-native speakers of English in Los Angeles, California. Mrs. Leslee Reed, the collaborating teacher for Staton, Shuy and Kreeft's original dialogue journal study (1979-81) has continued to write in dialogue journals with her 1980-81 and 1981-82 students, none of whom are native speakers of Eng. Preliminary analysis of the journals shows a dramatic shift in the students' writing over a year's time, from an initially limited grasp of grammatical structures and a narrow range of topics and language functions, to the eventual use of complex structures and effective expression of a wide range of topics and functions. As the year progresses, both the students' and teacher's writing demonstrates the amazing degree to which the students become comfortable with (and confident about) their ability to communicate in English.

Oral language samples are also being collected once a month from several students, so that comparisons can be made between the development of oral competence with competence in written English over time. (For details, contact: Joy Kreeft, CAL)

Japanese Students Learning English

Shelley Gutstein, an Applied Linguistics Ph.D. candidate at Georgetown University and an experienced ESL teacher, tried the dialogue journals with a class of Japanese college students learning English in an intensive 8 week summer program. Shelley is now studying the language variation, self disclosure, and topic development in the journals for her dissertation at GU. She found the journals very useful in getting to know the students, even in the short period of time.

Note: We'd love to have samples of your dialogue journals, but please send just excerpts which you think others might learn from, also, please be sure you have both parents' and students' permission (for students under 18) to share them. Give us a pseudonym for the student which reflects cultural background. And, please let us know how you would like to be identified!

Some Applications of DJ's

Foreign Language

Dialogue journals are being used by Ceil Lucas (CAL) in a 12-week college-level Advanced English Composition course at Lorton Reformatory (D.C. Department of Corrections). The class meets once a week for 2 hours and students write in the journals for the last 20 minutes of each class. While the first topic was initiated by the teacher with the questions 'What do you like to read? Why?', each dialogue is clearly taking its own course as the semester progresses.

In addition, Lucas has used dialogue journals in a ten-week Introductory Italian course (second semester). The class meets 3 hours, once a week. Here again, the first topic was teacher-generated.

The journals have been a very useful teaching tool in these two language-diverse situations, one with dialect speakers and one with second language learners. In neither case does the teacher correct or overtly reference language differences - rather, use is made of modelling vocabulary items or grammatical constructions. The journals are successful in these situations precisely because the focus is not on language forms, but on communication. This may be particularly important in a language learning situation for adults

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Jose Goncalves is using dialogue journals in an advanced conversation class in Portuguese at Georgetown University. The students write in their journals in Portuguese once a week; Jose responds to them and returns their journals in the next class. The students are free to choose their own topics and Jose reports that typically they write about more personal topics than they discuss in the classroom. This results in a special benefit because the teacher and his students feel closer and he says that the dialogue journals have definitely increased teacher-student rapport.

Primary and Upper Elementary

Quinda Strube, a bilingual primary teacher in Riverside, California, has been using dialogue journals with her 1st and 2nd graders, some of whom write as much as 6th graders. She has found journals to be a good way to help students practice both Spanish and English (her 1st graders are using Spanish; her 2nd graders are moving into English). Students who were relying on the aide to dictate stories quickly began writing independently in the journals.

Here's a sample of one of the delightful topic-focused conversations in these journals.

A: Dear Miss Strube: I love Sonia because she's pretty would you tell Sonia that she's pretty and tell her that I love her. OK! Juan.

T: Why do you want me to tell her? Do you really want me to tell her? I think she's pretty, too!

S: Dear Miss S. Yes I want you to tell her Please porque tengo Wehvanga (Because I am embarrassed.)

T: But won't you be embarrassed even if I tell her? Would you like T_____ to tell her?

S: Dear Miss Strube: Forget it. I just give her a ring and a necoless and I'm going to give her more things.

T: What do you want me to forget? Did you give a ring and necklace to Sonia? What did she do?

S: She said thank you and I said you welcome and that all.

Kristina Lindberg, Wilmington Park Elementary School, has combined dialogue journals with Sylvia Ashton-Warners Language experience approach for her 1st grade class. Each child begins by choosing personal "key" words, and the teacher, after writing the word, begins writing phrases in the child's journal. The child copies or makes the phrase into a sentence, and the teacher responds. This continues until the possibilities of that personal key word have been exhausted, and the child asks for a new word. This information came to us from Leslee Reed - we hope to hear from Kristina directly about how it's going.

Nona Ramirez and several other teachers in Riverside have been using dialogue journals for two years at the elementary level. As old hands, we'd like to know what you think of it now?

High School

How can you manage dialogue journals at the high school level?

Gretchen Vasquez, in Coachella, California, began two years ago by encouraging her ESL students to write her a note or letter if they wanted to and promising to write back. The next year she chose 2 classes and had them write once a week, on different days. She found that she became like a friend, and the dialogue moved from newsy, superficial writing into more significant topics. Many of her students use English for academic concerns but switch to Spanish for more personal topics. When she tried it a second year with the same group of students, there was a drop off of interest and length--there may be limits!

Janey Engelman Lisenby, in La Quinta, California has also been using the journal with her Basic Skills class, on a once a week basis.

At the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (at Gallaudet College, D.C.) 3 English teachers, Janet Rothenberg, Cindy Puthoff, and Mary Martone, all deaf themselves, began dialogue journals about a month ago, and are very excited about their students' response--one teacher reports that quiet, passive students are communicating more in the journal (a second language) than in class (Sign Language)! The students are given freedom to write as often as they want during the week--since MSSD classes are small, this is manageable and gives the teacher an indication of engagement. The teachers are planning to write up their experience.

A number of high school teachers at the Breadloaf Rural Teachers of English program who were in workshops on dialogue journal writing last summer went home with plans to try it out - We'd love to hear about it, as high school teaching loads make individual interaction more problematical. Any solutions?

Essay Dialogues

Wilmington, California, English teachers picked up the idea from a workshop with Leslee Reed and came up with an interesting adaptation. They write back with questions and comments about the content of the essay (instead of corrections) on first drafts of each student's essays, and the student responds. When questions and ideas have been worked through in several exchanges, the student goes about revising. Teachers reported that the average length of time for students to revise an assignment was a month, before dialoguing. Now it's down to a week or two, and students request more chances to write dialogues.

College/Graduate School

One of the most interesting and unexpected spin-offs of dialogue journals has been their use by college instructors with their own students.

Bill Stokoe, at Gallaudet College, began using dialogue journals last year in his research seminars on American Sign Language, which included a mixture of deaf, hearing-impaired and normal hearing students. Bill says, "What surprised me right at the start was the pleasure I took from reading my students' journal entries and from replying to them directly. Instead of finding it one more of the many tasks to be done, or put off, I found myself hurrying back to the office to read each day's entries as soon as possible, to see what this interesting person I saw across the classroom was saying to me or asking about. I also found that the few minutes that it took to read and reply were among the best minutes of the day. I never got to know the students in my class so well. With the dialogue journals I stopped worrying about how to teach the class to meet all their needs. Each one through his or her journal was getting individual instruction and, from what they wrote in the journals, very much appreciating it. Naturally, with a happily progressing class, I was a happy teacher. I doubt I will ever teach without dialogue journals again. They don't increase a teacher's burdens, they lighten them."

Roger Shuy, Georgetown University, tried the journals out with his linguistics field methods class. he asked his students to use the journal as a means of recording their observations of fieldwork projects, and then reflecting, asking questions (even complaining!). Roger describes his experiences.

"I've always been rather close to my grad students but I've never felt closer than I did that semester. What was shocking to me, however, was that the students made clear to me in their journals exactly where they were in their development. This enabled me to individualize my struction,in their journals, but also in the class itself, in ways I had never done before. Every teacher has general assumptions about the progress of the class as a whole based on clues given by a few. I discovered something that I suppose I should have known - not all students were at the place I thought they were. Some only caught on to the central concepts at the very end. This knowledge, revealed privately in their journals but not made openly in the class, guided me in teaching all 12 of them in different aspects of the course that they needed. I believe I did as much teaching in the journals as I did in the seminar meetings."

Vic Rentel, Ohio State University, College of Education, thought that dialogue writing would be a good way to develop understanding and keep in touch with teachers taking a graduate level practicum on classroom supervision. It has been good--the enrollment doubled and the experience was as exciting for Vic as for the students.

Vic speculates that in addition to the learning and awareness which the act of writing itself brings about, the bonds of trust established in the dialogue journals helped these adults to take greater risks in encountering new knowledge and new procedures. Plus, he suggests, "supervising teachers must have strong skills in interpersonal communication. Ordinary expository writing, with its explaining function, may tend to obliterate the kind of interpersonal language supervisors need to have. The dialogue journal draws on and encourages the rich interpersonal function of oral language. I think it is ideal for developing the skills I want in supervising teachers."

Interactive Writing - Different Formats, Different Partners

A close cousin of student-teacher dialogue journals is the practice of having students initiate a continuous correspondence with another student in a journal or letter format.

Amanda Branscombe, of Auburn High School, Auburn, Alabama, has paired a class of 11th and 12th graders with another class of 9th grade basic writing students, and offered them the opportunity of writing letters to one another, once a week, on topics of their own choosing, without teacher grades or comments. Her students keep this conversation going all year - sharing experiences, offering advice and support.

Research on a sample of these letters by Jim Marshall of Stanford University found growth in length of entry, number and type of cognitive processes used, and text coherence as students became more knowledgeable about and comfortable with their audience, and as they mutually negotiated an agenda of topics for discussion. Jim and Amanda are writing a paper on the results.

Anne Herrington, now at SUNY, Albany, reports a similar practice worked with a class of basic writers in a junior college, using a journal rather than letter format. Once the students got started, they kept it going without any urging--all Anne did was arrange the initial pairings, and collect and deliver the journals each class period. (Students did not 'know' their partners, except in the journals.)

Dialogue journal writing does not need to be confined to a school setting. The staff members and residence supervisors of Group Homes for mentally impaired adults in Maryland will meet in April to explore the uses and potential benefits of dialogue journal writing in the Group Home situation. Dialogue writing between a Group Home supervisor and the residents of the home will provide the opportunity for ongoing, open communication, free from the social

(cont. on page 6)

(Group Homes continued)
constraints that accompany oral, face-to-face communication. It is hoped that the dialogue writing will lay a foundation for increased oral communication.

Summer Conference: Benefits to the Teachers

We've talked a lot about the benefits to the students of having them keep a dialogue journal, but all of us who've tried it as instructors do it as much for ourselves, as for the students. Leslee Reed is now giving workshops on the dialogue journals as an 'anti-teacher burnout' method.

What are the benefits to teachers--individualizing instruction is one, and reducing discipline problems another. We'd like to hold some informal get togethers where we can articulate and share the values to the teacher - US! - of keeping dialogue journals with our classes.

Leslee Reed plans to visit Washington, D. C. in late June and we hope to hold one such working conference for a day while she's here, at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Date, time, and format aren't set, but we'd like to know who would be interested in attending from the East Coast area. If you come, you'll be asked to share your experiences - that's the price of admission!!

A similar conference in California may be possible again, as an opportunity for teachers at all levels to learn from each other.'

What Do I Tell My Friends? - A Teacher's Handbook.

Explaining the concept of dialogue writing is simple - and very difficult. Teachers with intuitive sense about communication and language seem to pick it up by osmosis, or may have already been doing it. But it's easy to miss the uses -- so Leslee Reed and Jana Staton are now working on a teacher's handbook, to provide both a practical guide for doing it, and the concepts and theory which make it work. The Center for Applied Linguistics is interested in publishing it.

A tentative outline of the handbook, subject to much revision, is as follows:

I. What is a Dialogue Journal?
II. How Can It Help My Students?
III. How Can It Help Me?
IV. How Do We Get Started?
    -strategies for initiating and maintaining it
V. How Do I Respond?
VI. A Look at Dialogue Journal Writing in Different Settings.
VII. Some Common Questions Teachers Ask.

If any of you could share with us your strategies for getting it started in different situations, or ideas you have about why it works, it would help us to address different problems and needs. We'll try to share what you send in the newsletter, and use it in the handbook.

Back to the question of what do I tell my friends when they ask, 'What do we talk about?' Two questions which are useful to ask a friend who is considering trying it are these. They focus on the journals as a real communicative event.

1. What do you want to <u>know</u> about your students, that you don't have a chance to learn in regular classroom interaction? What do they want to know about you?

2. What do you need and want to communicate to your students - about learning, growing up, mastering a language - that you don't get a chance to say in your regular classroom interactions. What do your students need to tell you?

'Great' Dialogue Journal Moments'
from Mrs. Reed's journals

S: Mrs. Reed I think you get 7 son and dother. Did you?
T: No! I have one son and one daughter! That is my family. But I like my class at Alexandria--they are like my sons and daughters.
S: You don't what do you have! I don't belive it looks you have 2 dog's and 2 turtles and, 1 cat so looks you have 1 son 1 dother the animals is 5 so you got 7 son and dother see that.
T: Oh! Ho! I see what you mean about my family! You were counting my animals, too!

DON'T FORGET - WRITE BACK TO US AND TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCES. ALSO LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE SUMMER WORKSHOPS.

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT

Dialogue Journals

Editor: Becky Michael, CAL

Volume I, No. II

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

*A special prepublication offer for the Dialogue Journal Handbook. See the last page. Please share this flyer (and the newsletter) with other teachers and administrators. Prepublication prices are good only until January 1983

*Tips on how to prevent this from being the last issue!!

*Benefits to the Teacher - Proceedings of the CAL conference on how dialogue journals help the teacher!

NEWS ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

With the end of our NIE grant, this newsletter has become a voluntary effort on our part, to stay in touch with people around the country (and overseas) and to share with others the information you have been sending us. If there are to be any more issues, we need some volunteering from our readers in TWO WAYS:

THE FIRST WAY YOU CAN HELP IS.....We need more NEWS, ...general comments on the problems, joys, and benefits of using dialogue journals. This issue is mostly devoted to the theme "Benefits to Teachers." We have selected topics for the next two issues and especially invite you to send in information about them. We'll even call you back if you send a note asking for a "personal" dialogue, just give us numbers where you can be reached at night or on Saturdays. The next two topics will be: (1) What do students say? - Student comments and reactions, both written and oral, about their dialogue journal experiences, offer us really important insights into why the journals work, and how to make them even more useful. (And not just glowing tributes, either...student criticisms are even more interesting.) One issue will pull together all the comments we have and any you send. Please give your students a suitable "pseudonym" and include age and any personal context. (2) Problems - Here's a chance to bring up problems. If you'll write down your questions or problems and send them in, we'll try to answer as many as we can, and print those we can't for others to answer. If you need an opening sentence, try "Dear Leslee,..."

THE SECOND WAY YOU CAN HELP IS.....We need a small contribution from everyone on our mailing list (now over 300 names) to cover the mailing costs of these next two issues and to let us know who really wants to receive the newsletter. So... the next issue will be sent to those who send in $1.00 to cover postage and production costs for two more issues. We can handle actual cash; if you must send a check make it out to Jana Staton. We need your response of news and contribution BY DECEMBER 1, 1982.

(There's a handy form on the top of page 2 to help you out! Thanks!)

THE HANDY FORM:

To: Becky Michael, Dialogue Journal Newsletter, Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N. W., Washington, D. C. 20007

Yes, I would like 2 more issues. Here's $1.00 and my best mailing address.

_____

_____

_____

Here's some news for the student reactions issue:

or: Here's my problem:

CONFERENCE ON BENEFITS TO TEACHERS

"Why do you do them? How will they help my teaching? What will I get in return for spending several hours a week reading and responding to each student?"

If you're already using dialogue journals, those are some of the questions other teachers may have asked you. If you're thinking about using them, those may be questions you've asked yourself.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the benefits to <u>us</u> as instructors of keeping dialogue journals. In June, when Leslee Reed was visiting Washington, D. C., we held an informal conference at the Center for Applied Linguistics for teachers in this area who had started using dialogue journals. The conference helped us all understand that there <u>are</u> substantial benefits for teachers: Leslee Reed calls the journals her "survival technique" -- "they keep me from burning out as a teacher."

The conference documented how the dialogue journal contributes to the process of education itself, and adapts itself to the goals and needs of each teacher. We can't reproduce here the enthusiasm and energy in the presentations, but we will devote this issue to highlights from each presentation, and we have included as many samples from dialogues at different age levels as we have room for. We hope that this brief synthesis of the conference presentations will broaden your understanding of why we find ourselves saying "I wouldn't ever teach without the dialogue journals."

<u>AGENDA</u>

Welcome, Introductions and Goal Setting
Jana Staton
"The Dialogue Journal as an Anti-Teacher Burnout Technique": Leslee Reed
<u>Elementary/Secondary Panel Discussion</u>
Joyce Saville, 2nd Grade
Selma Horowitz, Kindergarten (presented by Jana Staton)
Susan Veitch, 8th Grade English
<u>ESL Panel</u>
Joyce Kreeft, Adult Business English
Shelley Gutstein, Japanese ESL
Richard Vann, College ESL (GU)
Christine Meloni, College ESL
Linda Mazer, College ESL
Nina Turitz, College ESL
<u>Content Areas/Diversity Panel</u>
Roger Shuy, Graduate Fieldwork Methods
Ceil Lucas, Lorton Prison (College Writing)
Jose Goncalves, Portuguese (FL)
Bill Stokoe, Research Seminar (Deaf and HI students)
Jessie Roderick, Teacher Education Class
-2-<u>General Discussion on Benefits to the Teacher</u>

KEYNOTE SPEECH BY LESLEE REED:

Leslee Reed, in her keynote speech to the conference, spoke about how the dialogue journals had become for her an anti-burnout" technique.

"Have you ever felt you were the one who ended up in your classroom with a full class, the mandate to teach ALL, complete all surveys, forms, questionnaires and, oh, yes, document everything (being accountable is important), yet do it all with a smile, meet parents, attend meetings, and be so enthused about your work that you radiate? After all a good teacher will/can/should! It sure leads to that "What's the use?", "No way can I keep this up!", "Just not enought time!" feeling. If you have, you're not alone. Here, for me, is the answer. I am no longer the automatic form filler-inner! I become, through Dialogue Journals, a real person with thoughts, ideas and a really alive audience listening to just me!"

"It is obvious that my years of teaching are many. So many of my colleagues have burned out, leaving our profession the poorer for their moving into other fields. Adjustments to the 'new' techniques, the 'new' taxonomy, the 'new' addition to the curriculum, the multitude of innovations aimed at improvement of staff, all become tolerable because of my security blanket, the Dialogue Journals."

In her speech, Leslee makes it clear that using dialogue journals has helped her keep her enthusiasm for teaching.

Leslee goes on to list some of the many benefits of using the dialogue journal: "getting an immediate response to my ideas, being asked genuine questions about myself, and developing a common bond of understanding and trust, which makes my classroom a friendly instead of a lonely place." She also demonstrated how effective the journals are in reaching the bilingual child and adapting instruction to the needs of very gifted and of newly emigrated students.

"I always know what's going on in their thinking and their lives that might affect their work, and I know who's ready for learning, so I can suggest new assignments.

"How can such enjoyment be work and so valuable at the same time? It causes forms, surveys, bulletins to seem so unimportant. I'm dealing with real issues and my students know I am real. We are learning together as each of us is getting a direct, immediate response. We are human and not a bit or bite in some computer program! I invite you to try Dialogue Journals for the joy, the insights, the laughter and for the opportunity to be yourself!"

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PERSPECTIVES

"You need to write something that says what you want it to say."

Selma Horowitz, a kindergarten-first grade teacher at Mar Vista Elementary School, Los Angeles, could not attend, but sent along some wonderful examples of her beginning writers' work to share with us. Selma found that the dialogue journal helped all her students "break into print," because even a first word or a sentence received an immediate response. Her five and six year olds were quite able to write full pages (in a small journal) by the end of the year. She also observed that slower students learned from observing others, even though they thought they "couldn't" write! Selma reports that "I've never gotten to know a class so well" - and this evaluation comes from a teacher with many years of successful teaching experience.

In the actual examples reproduced on the next page, we can see the diversity of discourse styles among 5 and 6 year olds and their ability to carry out conversations in writing after only a few months of daily opportunity. The most impressive example of writing development is Erik's journal. Selma comments that Erik was slow at getting into reading and writing, and for the first month would just copy the same one sentence in his journal - "I like _____." Then on November 18 he sat next to a boy who wrote a whole paragraph. Erik's first try at discourse is a creative mixture of letters. Selma's brilliant,

Chris

Dec 16 1981
I like Birds flamingos and peacocks and red-headed woodpeckers and blue jays and robins and sandpipers and puffins and toucans I like dinosaurs stegosaurus triceratops diplodocus tyrannosaurus pteradactyl pantosaurus ichthyosaurus.

Davida

January 19 1982

today I ate in the cafe

So what did they have in the cafe?

pizza ☐
tacos ☐
hot dogs ☐
_____? ☐
None
Others
Fish Sticks ☒

Facsimile Excerpt (Reduced) from Dialogue Journals in Selma Horowitz' K-1 Class, 1981-82.

Denise - Kindergarten

Dec 4 1981
I Has Eggs And Toast
I have soccer tomorrow

What color is your uniform? blue And White

Can you draw me a picture of it? NO Why not? I don't know what it looks like

Raymundo - E.S.L.

Nov 16, 1981

I like Raymund
He is a big boy.
He is in room 6.
I saw some books
I like Chris
I like Calvin

(Nov. 18)

Erik

NOV 18 1981
[illegible]

Erik, if you have a journal, you need to write something that says what you want it to say.

(Nov. 19)

Erik

NOV 19 1981
I like to play with Douglas
I like to play with Brian and Christopher
And Syrah
And Gabriel
And Mark
And Robert
And Robert

This writing says something.

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And now, for maximum contrast.....

an interaction from a dialogue journal in a graduate school seminar, courtesy of Roger Shuy.

(student) ... Moving more cryptically along these general lines, I am beginning to ask myself what my intentions are in this course.... While I have experienced a certain sense of accomplishment and confidence-building (by conducting these interviews), I seem, also, to be plodding through a stage of questioning what this all has to do with real life. True, because this course requires fieldwork, it is probably one of the most applicable ones in the whole program, but still, that nagging question remains. It may be that my expectations of my own learning capabilities are ridiculously impatient. I want to gather together everything I am learning and immediately do something "real" with it. I realize the absurdity of this, since many of these "skills" may not ever be utilized directly. Rather, they may incorporate themselves into the wandering course of my life, and be realized over the span of time itself.

As a result of this course, I feel continually emboldened and stringthened, as I approach and participate in the fieldwork aspect. On the other hand, as far as the rest of the program is concerned, I feel a kind of pointless and claustrophobic immersion into the ivory tower of academic theory. There is an obvious need for a solid "balance" here, as well. The dichotomy is very strong

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(instructor) If you look for the applicable, practical direction use of linguistics, or any other science, to real life problem, you may not find that others have done it. Or even want to. There are people, good people, in the world whose strength is to theorize respectable. There are others who are "innovators" who spend new data to old models. There are persons for who real out problem, application a theory. Maybe rather than "guessing" (perhaps too loaded) about not finding real life in theory courses, you should about the theory and think about how it could be useful to solve real problems. What can discourse theory, ethnography, pragmatics, variation theory do for problem? There must be some role or we wouldn't be teaching these things. There are steps in this process.

1. Setting, observing
2. Seeking out data
3. Organizing data — finding patterns, analogy
4. Selecting the theory that best serves the needs created by the problem
5. Doing the work

We try to provide experience, theory, etc at all levels. Sometimes we do it well and sometimes it happens. Sometimes the student has to fill in the gaps that the teacher leaves out (from ignorance, carelessness or willfulness). But the burden is the student's to learn. All we can do is to put you in the context of the topic and tell you how we'd do it. But you and your and your way is the way you have to do it.

to-the-point suggestion seems to have facilitated a sudden 'fitting together' of several strategies--filling the page, 'saying something,' and building more information on a good opening line!

'It's Like Talking on the Telephone'

Joyce Saville, a second grade teacher in the Christina School District, Bear, Delaware, explained to her students that writing in dialogue journals is like talking on the telephone: 'When you talk on the phone, you take turns talking. One person talks and then the other person answers. That's dialogue. I don't have enough time to talk to each of you every day, so I want you to write what you would like to say. I will take my turn tonight writing an answer." This analogy made for an easy and meaningful transition from oral to written communication and helped her young students understand that this kind of writing and reading would be useful.

Joyce started dialogue journals late in the fall, with a new class "hastily thrown together" as a result of a desegregation order. She stressed the greatest benefit to her was that the immediate personal contact in the journals helped develop a close, personal feeling with her students right away. Then teaching and learning became possible for this class, and for their teacher.

Students were given some time after recess to write in their journals and could keep them the rest of the afternoon to write more if they wished. Joyce made sure students knew they could "sound out words and write them out" without worrying if they didn't know how to spell them.

"Dialogue Journals with Junior High Students"

Susan Veitch, now on the national staff of the American Federation of Teachers, described how she managed a journal process in junior high school several years ago, working with five all-male English classes in an alternative school program in Ohio. She had each class write on a different day of the week and while she read all the journals each night, she wrote back only to those students who really seemed to need response and encouragement. With a few students, she kept up almost a daily dialogue, because of their special needs--an excellent way to use the dialogue process when student load is far too great to do it with everyone.

Susan reported two major benefits: "The journals helped me in managing each class - getting them settled down and ready to learn. By rotating the days in which I would read their journals (first period journals were turned in on Monday, given back on Tuesday, second period on Tuesday, etc.), I could manage to keep in direct touch with 140 students. I could choose to write back if a student really needed a response and to do it on a daily basis with a few. The daily dialogues with the students who really needed to talk to me helped me manage a hyperactive boy who could not communicate with me in any other way at first. I think the journal was the first time anyone had ever really listened to him. I would never have understood all the things that were going on with him without the journal. I was also able to help a student experiencing guilt over his brother's sudden death - otherwise his depression could have become suicidal."

Susan found that these two students who dialogued with her regularly out of personal needs benefitted academically. They became two of the best writers in the class and wrote a book of stories for children, which was incredibly well-written and moving.

The second panel consisted of six teachers in various adult ESL programs in the Washington, D.C. area.

'The Journal is a Bridge'

Christine Meloni used dialogue journals during the spring semester, 1982, in her advanced composition ESL class at George Washington University, in Washington, D. C. The course is roughly equivalent to a freshman English course. She had 12 students in her class (11 men and 1 woman), majors in English and computer science. The students wrote in their journals for the first 20 minutes of each class period, five days a week. At first, Christine was afraid that the students would think the journals were too babyish for a course entitled, 'Composition and Research Methods.' But she soon found that the journals were valuable to her because, "They made a technical research and composition course (not my favorite) fun to teach. I enjoyed the course. I had the satisfaction of doing something for my students as persons, not just as academic 'objects'."

The response from the students was also very positive. One of the students, Minh Luc from Vietnam, feels that the journals provide a bridge, connecting the lives of the students and their professor: "I really appreciate the idea of writing a journal in class. It not only helps me in grammar, in writing, it helps me solving problems such as studying, making friends, and so on. I am sure that I am improving very much because of the help of the journal. Additionally, the journal is a bridge which connects students' problems, lives to their professor. Toward (through) the journal, professor can understand students easily."

'It gives us the confidence of writing'

Nina Turitz teaches at the Maryland English Institute, University of Maryland (College Park). She has eight students for two hours per day. They write for the first ten minutes of each class. When asked whether they found the journals useful and/or enjoyable, her students had a variety of responses and comments. Several students felt that their writing was helped by the daily practice of writing in the journal. One student from Egypt commented that a journal "gives us the opportunity to write without any problem also it gives us the confidence of writing," while an Indian student said, "Specially I am getting to know new words and important thing I am knowing idea according to your writting response. How you write a sentence and your sentence structure." A Guatemalan added that in addition to helping him to write better, "that help to talk too, because we write that we are thinking at the moment, is like you were talking."

Several students mentioned benefits which go beyond the purely linguistic. A woman from Venezuela said that for foreign students, "this kind of communication is essential in order to know a lot of things. In some cases this type of dialog could be the unique communication of the foreign student with an american person an is especially useful." A Chinese woman commented, "I like this kind of activity because, from here I can practice English dialog with my teacher. I tell her my troubles in my life as well as in my study, and my teacher could help me a lot. I can know how to live and how to study well. And my teacher can give me some good idea that I haven't." But, she feels, "when I do this activity the teacher is very important. She should be very kind and patient....Because she'll spend a lot of time to do this activity with us."

(continued from page 5)

Only one student in the class, a young man from Taiwan, did not find the journal helpful. He explained, "I don't know what I am writing. I tried to find a subject to write before I went to class every day, but I fail. I have a suggestion that is we can do it as a diary at home. If this is possible, I will do it better." Ilina comments: "A nice advantage to the journal is that a request such as this can be easily fulfilled. This particular student now writes in his journal at home and brings it to me a few minutes before class starts. I have less difficulty than he in writing a quick response, and our new system seems to be working out satisfactorily."

"The journals get me through all kinds of tense situations"

Joy Kreeft taught a 15-week business English course for ESL students with the Arlington County Adult Education Program. Two hours of each day were spent learning business vocabulary, simulating business situations and doing business writing. One hour was devoted to grammar study. The students wrote in dialogue journals for 20 minutes, three days a week, before one of the two breaks (so they could take more time if they needed it). This was a joyous time during which the students read and wrote eagerly, often breaking the silence with laughter about something Joy had written or something they were writing back. Joy relates: "The grammar part of the course tends to be a high-tension experience for these adult students because 'grammar' is in effect a standard. So 'learning' in this hour becomes an effort to measure up to this high standard - to measure up to me, to what they think I want them to achieve. I wanted to do the journals so the students would have an experience of doing their own learning, of being able to start where they are and talk to me. The journals get me through all kinds of tense situations. On one day we had a grammar test which, judging from their behavior and looks afterwards, was devastating. I could tell that they didn't feel very good at all. After they turned in their tests, they immediately went to their journals and the atmosphere in the classroom changed. As they began to read and write, their faces and posture relaxed, and they laughed and wrote freely. It was as if they were getting their bearings again and remembering that we had things to say to each other and we were capable of saying them."

Joy also found that as the students wrote, they told about their previous experiences in business and asked questions about business options for the future. As a result, she was able to do some 'career counseling' in the journals and structure her course to suit the students' individual backgrounds and meet particular needs. The following are some examples of background information, questions, and requests that provided valuable input as she structured her course.

Student 1: *Ms. Kreeft, I realy want to join the computer class... did you think its good for me?... I just want to know the computer because that was so popular now and Im sure all of the companies will use that machine too in the near future. Maybe if you know some University about computers systems, let me now please.*

Student 2: *What do you think about my situation. I like to study Business but I think it is better to study other degree in this country. I like International marketing and I have experience in computers. I don't know what will I study here. What do you say?*

Student 3: *There is a school is near to my home and in that school I can receive or take "Data process" and English classes. Well, I will be taking.*

Student 4: *My first job was in a Water company where worked during three years, in that job got a lot of experience in use all kind the machines, electric typewriter, calculator, I.B.M. programming...then later I got a good position as PResident's secretary in one of more famous company in my city.... where my duties were typing, preparing agenda, preparing all the appointment of the Presdient, dictation in shorthand, telephone call.*

"A chance to share feelings, knowledge and talents"

Linda Hazer used dialogue journals in a nine-week ESL program at Marymount College in Arlington, Virginia, in connection with reading classes at advanced, beginning and intermediate levels. She had 12 students, who wrote for the first 15 to 20 minutes of class five days a week. The journal writing not only allowed her to personalize her teaching, but provided her students with the opportunity to express themselves freely about topics of their own choosing with positive feedback from Linda and gave them a chance to share feelings, knowledge, and talents they may not otherwise have shared. One student commented, "...you can talk to your teacher about a lot of things that may be you can't do it in class or after it." It also gave students a chance to experiment with English structures that they might not otherwise have dared to use. The two examples that follow give powerful evidence of the freedom and creativity that some students experience when writing in dialogue journals:

Student 1: *Sometimes I think it is not easy to be a daughter and also be by yourself. I want to do what ever my father think is good for me, but sometimes it is not the things I would like to do. By the way he thinks that Business Administration is a good career for the future, but I think that I was not born for mathematic. I always dream to be a good painter, drawing beautiful imagines about the earth or faces. I could not even think to be all day long sitting on a chair in front of a desk having problems to resolve. By this moment, I would like to live in another city, I do not want to go back to Honduras. I really do not like that country. I feel terrible and oppressive. For my future, I always been thinking to live in a prairie, with the ocean near my house, beautifull trees around my house and natural air. I want to be free and be myself.*

Teacher: *Spielberg's next great success was 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind'. Did you see that? I thought it was fun, but rather silly. After this movie many people reported having cosmic, other world experiences. I guess it's remotely possible, but I'm very skeptical. What do you think about UFO's (unidentified flying objects). Have you ever seen one? Do you know anyone who has seen one? Do people in Honduras believe in them as much as Americans seem to?*

Student: *In my country there was something strange that I think nobody is going to forget. It happened two years ago. All the lights of the city went off. And for a moment something red crossed the sky from east to west. And half an hour it happened in the capital and then in a little town called Pinalejo. The t.v. went off and the radios went crazy. I didn't see the red thing. I only remember a noise. It was like the sound of a violin. The dogs of the house barked and the birds were restless. Some people of my country believe in these things called UFOs but some of them don't. I believe in it. I think there are other people like us in other galaxies. Maybe more advanced than we are, right now.*

"Students as teachers"

Shelley Cutstein, who now teaches ESL at George Washington University, first used dialogue journals in 1981 with her low intermediate class of Japanese students learning English in a summer program at the University of Tennessee at Martin. Her students studied grammar with her for two hours daily for ten weeks. They wrote for 15-20 minutes at the beginning of each class. Shelley found that the journals provide a forum for the exchange of cultural information, and, as such, allow the student to temporarily assume the role of 'teacher.' "In the journals, I could begin to understand their culture and social values. They had the opportunity to teach me important concepts in their language through explanations in the journal. This cultural information is vital to social communication." An example of the kind of information exchange that occurred in the journals comes from the journal of Akihiro:

Teacher: *I understand very well your feeling about your parents. When I went to Spain I felt the same way...I was older than you are (I was 23) but my experience was the same as yours* Wakarimashitaka?

Student *By the way ((TOKORODE)) Why did you know Japanese words? (WAKARIMASHITAKA?) When I read this journal, I was surprised..... Do you think that you want to know more Japanese? Then I'm Japanese teacher?????.....*

Teacher: *Yes, I'd LOVE to know more Japanese. Will you be my Japanese teacher? Maybe you can teach me during my office hours or at another time. TOKORODE I think you will be a fine teacher. I hope I'm as good a student as you are. Oh, the reason I know Japanese words is because I like Japanese people (especially my students!) and I want to learn about Japan.*

Student: *I said a slip of the tongue yesterday.....You wrote on brackboard, 'As hungry as 3B students.'* Then Everybody in class said. 'Shi-tsu-reina' (Japanese) You said "What?", "What?" I wanted to teach you what everybody said. And I saw my dictionary. Then I feeled uneasy. "I'm sorry."..... (SHI-TSU-REINA = impolite) Japanese students' words in fasion. We use to make a joke. please permit!*

Teacher: *I am learning a great deal about Japanese culture--by making mistakes! In Americo the sentence about being hungry is funny, but not impolite. I was surprised that the class reacted then, and when we talked about age today. But I was not angry.*

*A sentence like this would not be used as an example in a classroom in Japan. To refer to acquaintances in a way that can be interpreted as negative is impolite.

"Some questions from a teacher"

Richard Vann used dialogue journals with a low intermediate ESL class at George Washington University. His 12 students wrote for 15 minutes a day. During his presentation, Richard raised some important questions about the use of the journals. All of us, at some time or another, must answer these questions for ourselves:

- How much time should students be given to write? Should journal writing be done every day? Should it be done during class time or on individual time? (Richard found that his students had trouble expressing themselves within the 15 minute time limit that he had set.)
- Should students be allowed or encouraged to take their journals home to write? (He found that if his students took their journals home, they forget them the next day.)
- What should be done if a student doesn't feel motivated to write or simply cannot think of anything to write?

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- What if you, the teacher, don't feel motivated to write?
- What if the student wants his/her writing to be graded?
- How can you respond to the 'good performance syndrome' of some students--such a fear of writing something that is not 'perfect' that it becomes impossible to write anything at all?
- How can you respond to the 'composition syndrome'--when the student feels that all writing must take the form of a school essay about such topics as 'Transportation in my country,' and so writes one such essay in the journal each day?
- Does writing in a dialogue journal increase a teacher's workload to an unmanageable or undesirable extent?

Perhaps some of you have some good answers! These are the kinds of questions teachers often raise when they first begin.

BENEFITS IN DIVERSE SETTINGS

The third panel consisted of instructors using dialogue journals in diverse settings - prison education, graduate research seminars, teacher training, and foreign language classes. Here are their insights:

"Understanding the real nature of writing as a dialogue"

Ceil Lucas, who has used the journals in composition classes she teaches at Lorton Prison (see Newsletter #1), found that the dialogue helped her with her students' (ages 20-50) bad attitudes about writing. "They saw writing as a dry, formal process. The dialogue journals helped them understand the real nature of writing as a dialogue between writer and reader. It also helped them work out how to handle their time to plan goals for using their time in prison creatively, and it allowed me - an outsider and a woman - to help them think through those plans."

Ceil found that they discuss life issues that they had no time to talk about in class, or that they would never have brought up in face-to-face communication. She said the greatest benefit to her was the "excitement" of reading their entries. "I found I was so anxious to know what they said that I'd try to read them while driving back from Lorton to D.C. ! And the journals gave me instances that fit exactly the content of my class - style differences, voice, addressing an audience - so I could explain and reinforce in the journals the concepts taught in class, answering their questions by pointing out instances in their own entries. I could show them that they also had a 'style' unique to them."

The following is a typical example of the kind of conversation Ceil had with her students. 'Joe' is in his forties, and has been in and out of prison for a good part of his adult life.

Ceil: *Why do you write poetry?*

Joe: *I enjoy saying things in a way that possibly noone else has said them. The rhythms of words in conjunction with my thoughts and then set to paper turns me on.*

The thought idea that only a person who is in tune with my thoughts will be enjoying my words turns me on.

I enjoy--words and phrases with implicit meanings.

Ceil: *As I was driving home last week and again when I read this, I thought to myself "How can someone who writes poetry, and good, interesting poetry to boot, say that he doesn't understand the style sheet?" If you can talk about "the rhythm of words in conjunction with my thoughts," then you must be able to see it in other people's writing, no? To see the choices that they have made----isn't it the same choice process that you use when you write?*

Do you write poetry at particular times? Why do you write when? Who are you talking to?

Joe: *The only resemblance in my writing to that of other writers is that we use words. Trained writers have a method in their work--whereas, I only have a knowledge of word usage and write purely from instinct of what should go where. I can recognize that my work sometimes lacks continuity because I write as I think which at times is incoherent....*

Ceil: *Well, I'm gonna keep on arguing! I believe that if you ask any trained writer, he would say that writing is, as you say, a knowledge of word usage and instinct, and he would say that writing is thinking. Is there something wrong with saying to yourself and others, 'Hey, I can write?'...*

"A chance to ask (and answer) practical questions"

Jessie Roderick, University of Maryland School of Education, began using dialogue journals in a course for teachers in Language Arts which met twice a week. She found that they were immediately helpful in supporting the course emphasis on individualized instruction. She found her students were actually doing in the dialogue journals the types of writing they were studying, trying out different types of writing. Because of the intensive twice-a-week meetings, the dialogue journals also gave students a chance to ask Jessie practical questions about how to apply the theories and concepts stressed in class; this aspect helped her individualize the instruction to meet their needs. She suggested their journal writing focus on "Language Arts and Learning," and many of the students used this theme to reflect on their own teaching in relation to broader experiences.

"Coping with real diversity"

Bill Stokoe, Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College, found the benefits to him were in communicating with students in a research seminar in Sign Language: some deaf, some normal hearing, one from a foreign country and one visually handicapped! The individual dialogues gave him feedback from each student about course content and an opportunity to explain what the student might not have been able to understand in class.

"Expanding my students' use of written Portuguese"

Jose Goncalves, Sociolinguistics Program, Georgetown University, teaches Portuguese to American students. He found that "dialogue journals in a foreign language situation helped me expand my students' use of written Portuguese beyond the literacy topics presented in their texts to everyday life situations. It also helped me to correct easily their use of false cognates from English and Spanish, a particular problem in mastering Portuguese, by being able to write back and model the correct Portuguese word or phrase.

"Making connections between each person and the discipline"

Roger Shuy, Sociolinguistics Program, Georgetown University, used the journals as an integral part of a graduate course in a sociolinguistics fieldwork class, having students write their observations and reflections about each linguistic fieldwork assignment. He said, "What I've learned from doing the dialogue journals was that I had a lot of goals for this class, beyond the learning of methods, some of which I hadn't made explicit to students, some of which I'm not too sure I knew, until I found myself writing them out as a response to a question. The 'greatest' benefit to me was that in rereading the journals for this presentation, I

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found that it taught me what my real goals for the field methods course were -- which weren't the ones listed in the course outline. The dialogue journals extended my teaching beyond the ostensible topic ("field methods"), and even beyond the discipline (linguistics) into life topics. We ended up discussing how to make connections between each person's life (including mine) and the topics and discipline we were in.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT'S CORNER

We have a few overseas correspondents - in South Africa, Australia, South and Central America. Herbert Nilsen is one, now teaching in Colombia. Here's his report, filed August 30, 1982.

"A little less than a year ago, I was most interested to read in the October 1981 issue of THE LINGUISTIC REPORTER, your article "Literacy as an Interactive Process." I have been using the system of dialogue journals with students here in a course called English Workshop. I have found enthusiastic participation. That is, to say students are more willing to write, and seem most pleased by the personal attention. I can understand this, since as you well know, compositions usually get a grade, or at most an in-class reading, never a carefully considered complete response from a thinking human being and an invitation to keep corresponding. It is still too early to be sure of overall results, I feel, but the fact of writing more, of writing for real communicative reasons, not just as a classroom procedure, of reading and evaluating that reading for a written response—all of this is genuine communicative activity and I can't see how it can fail to build not only writing skills, but all of the other skills as well by developing the cognitive processes basic to language for any purpose, at any level, and in any of its manifestations."

SPOTLIGHTS: Publications -- Conferences and Workshops

A number of us are involved in giving workshops, conference papers and in publishing our experiences. If you'll let us know about your activities, we'll include them in this space.

Future Conferences and Workshops

October 1 and 2, 1982 -
"Experiencing 'Real' English: Writing a Dialogue Journal"
Shelby Gutstein, Joy Kreeft, Christine Meloni, and Carol Harnatz, Washington Area TESOL Workshop.

November 19, 1982 -
" 'You Can Look It Up in Your Mind': Findings from Classroom Research on Dialogue Journal Writing."
Jana Staton, Research Paper at the National Council of Teachers of English, Washington, D. C.

May 1983 -
"Learning Literacy through Dialogue Journals."
Leslee Reed, Jana Staton, Joy Kreeft, Quinda Strube, Selma Horowitz, Sara Hill, Ramona Ramirez Gray, Mary Ann Pusey, Symposium, International Reading Association, Anaheim, Calif.

Publications

"Thinking Together: The Role of Language Interaction in Developing Children's Thinking" - Jana Staton, to appear as a handbook in the Talking and Writing Series, Basic Skills Improvement Program, U. S. Dept. of Education (Dec. 1982).

"Dialogue Journals: Learning Opportunity for Students and Their Teachers" - Margaret Crocker, Halifax, Nova Scotia, submitted to Highway One, Journal of the Canadian Council of Teachers of English. **

"Written Language Growth in Young Children: What We Are Learning from Research" - Marcia Farr, to appear as a handbook in the Talking and Writing Series, Basic Skills Improvement Program, U. S. Dept. of Education (Dec. 1982).

(**No word yet from Highway One but the article will appear in Dalhousie Univ. Monographs, N.S.)

Volume I, No. 3

Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dialogue

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

April, 1983

Editor: Jana Staton

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

We promised that this issue would present the benefits--and drawbacks--of engaging in dialogue journals from the students' point of view, to accompany the "Benefits to the Teacher" in our second issue. We believe strongly that the student's understanding of this experience is a crucial validation of its value, and that we must pay close attention to what they say about it. Here is a sampling, from 2nd grade, 6th grade, high school, and college/adult levels.

"You only look up in your mind"

These excerpts are from interviews with Leslee Reed's students, 6th grade, in 1981. All are learning English as a second language.

Claudia: "I would ask her what a word like 'chemistry' means. I didn't know, and in the dictionary I looked for it, but didn't really understand it. And she explained it to me[in the journal]. There are some questions you don't understand and you have to look it up in the dictionary. If you don't understand the dictionary, you use the journal. It's a kind of dictionary."

* * * * *

Martin: "If I have a question, and I feel embarrassed to ask her personally, I could write her in the journal. It's easier. You don't have to tell her personally, you can just write it, and she'll asnver it back. Before I didn't write that much about myself, but now I do."

* * * * *

Benny: "I just hate the journal. I don't like writing in it. At the starting of the year, I didn't mind so much, but now I do."

Int: "What do you think made the difference?"

Benny: "I'm bored. I don't want to write in my journal. Now our work is getting hard and I try to get home so I just leave my journal. When she gets mad at me for something I don't do, that's when I write in my journal, 'I hate you!'"

Int: "Then what happens?"

"You only look up-- cont.

Benny: "She writes, 'you may hate me but I don't hate you.... I'm going to keep my journal... I'm going to burn it!"

* * * * *

Letitia: "It helped me to learn English better, because I say something that doesn't make sense, and sometimes she writes me the same but with different words and I understand and so next time I put it right."

* * * * *

Int:"Do you write just three sentences?"

Claudia: No-ooo!"

Int: " Why not? You don't have to."

Claudia: "When you write just three sentences, it seems like you don't explain anything, and you don't have anything fun to read. It doesn't fit. Most of the time she writes the same as I write.

Int: "Why does she write more when you write more?"

Claudia: "Because I tell her more subjects, more things to talk about. "

* * * * *

Nicole: "Reports is-- you have to look up facts and everything, but journal is what you only look up in your mind and you write whatever you want. "

* * * * *

Jenny: "When we are writing in journals, she doesn't act like a teacher. She doesn't insist on her thing...she just answers my questions and tells me what she thinks. But she doesn't say you shouldn't think like that, like some people."

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"I found incredible things" - Graduate ESL students

Nina Turitz, an instructor at the Maryland English Institute, asked the thirteen graduate students in her intensive English class to give her their evaluations of the dialogue journals, which they had kept with her for a semester (at first writing every day in class, and gradually at home on their own time). She writes:

Eight students felt the activity had a positive effect on their writing: "Writing on different aspects and in different fields helped me to express myself. The more I write, the more I improve my way of writing." - from an Egyptian student. Four students expressed the desire that their journals be corrected for their grammatical errors. (In my rather limited experience -- two semesters -- with dialogue journals, there are always a few who feel this way.

Students commented that they appreciated the journals because they enabled them to communicate in writing what they found too difficult to express orally. A student from Shanghai said:

"At the beginning most foreigner cannot speak very fluently. They are afraid to make mistakes when they speak. So they can use journals to explain."

Perhaps the most touching and perceptive comments came from a Korean man studying counseling:

"At first, I confused to write journals, because I did not have enough ability to write English and I don't want to open my mind to other people, include my teacher. So, sometimes I hesitated to write journals and sometimes I upset from the journals.

One month later, I found incredible things. That was my journals. A lot of pages were covered by dialogues with my teacher, and very, very important things and content--even psychological problems--have discussed.... Some days my teacher encouraged about English study. Some days she gave me good suggestions. At last, I found the hidden meaning of the dialogue journals."

"To tell almost everything I have kept deep inside"

Christine Meloni, who teaches ESL at George Washington University, shares this final entry from an Iraqi student:

"I really don't want to finish talking with you on these silent papers, but I hope these white papers tell you about what I have carried as much thoughtful as I have carried to myself. I can't imagine how I was enjoying writing in this small notebook and how much I was waiting to know your opinion, your beautiful answers, and your wonderful feelings.

I don't want to end writing to you, because I loved this writing; so I have loved the person who let me express myself in the class environment and outside it, and let me avoid being shy to tell almost everything that I have kept deep inside myself."

"I always flip the pages, wanting to read your opinions"

At Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., deaf students are keeping dialogue journals with their instructors in several English Language program classes. Most deaf students are learning written English as a second language, and many dislike writing tasks in a language which they have never used for functional conversation. Here is one student's perspective on his first encounter with meaningful interactive writing:

"Writing journal is a great idea and I really enjoy doing it. I love the journal because it has a lot of writing and communications or feedbacks. When I come into here, I always flip the pages, wanting to read your opinions or stories. I always think about many things or beautiful pictures in my mind, and I frequently feel like to write about those things but I never did. But I do now after I notice how much I enjoy the journal. ...I really enjoy writing and get feedback from you as we're a lot the same and I'm glad to know that we are similar to each other!"

"You are less feeling afraid"

Joy Kreefts adult ESL students interviewed each other about their reactions to the dialogue journal experience.

"You know the first time that I wrote in my journal I was very afraid of writing. And now I can write easily. I'm not afraid to write. It's very easy for me writing. Also, when I write a letter, it's easy for my because I'm not afraid of writing now. After you write in a journal for 3 1/2 months you are able to try everything. You are less feeling afraid and then you are able to write in any journal or any paper that you have to write."- Carmen

"I can review new words. When I am writing, I sometimes check a dictionary and then ask her what a word means. Sometimes she gives me the correct answer and sometimes she is confused."- Jaime

"I always ask everything, anything that I want. I cannot stop asking. I use the journal to ask everything that I don't know. As long as I get this opportunity, I will not stop asking things in the journal. We can learn a lot by asking."- Widi

"It is GGG-rate. I like it"

Deborah Jaffer, a reading specialist in Philadelphia and a doctoral candidate at the Univ. of Pennsylvania, began using dialogue journals with a group of second graders last year, as a regular part of their daily reading class with her. At the end of the year, as good ethnographer, she documented the participant reactions to this new experience. Here are the written reactions of 7 and 8 year olds to dialogue journals:

"It is GGG-rate. I like it. I don't know why but it is fun. I Love it. It is the Best in the world. Theires millions of things to say I will tell you 1 of them. Because it's just like eating candy bar. Becase it is fun. It is even funner than eating a candy bar." (from a 7 year old girl who is extremely shy in oral interaction.)

"Meanwhile I love this kind of writing. If you want to know why then I'll tell you. If I want to write to you, then I don't know what the teacher is thinking to say to me. Maybe she will say something good. And mabe she will put a mark I've never herd of, or maybe a mark I cannot under stand well anyway: It is Best to write Back to you...GoodBye! I've wish I could stay. (an 8 year old boy who stated that he hates writing.)

"It was kind of neat and fun and different. And it some time funny. And I sometime don't like it. I can't think of anything." (8 year old girl)

"It was fun here. Because I feel like I was writing a real letter. It was like I'm a letter writer." (7 year old bilingual boy from the Phillipines.)

* * * WORKSHOP REQUEST * * *

Peggy Roberts, of Ashby, Mass.(north of Boston) has written to us asking if anyone in Massachusetts or nearby states using dialogue journals would be available to speak to teachers in Ashby, or give a workshop on their use.(We guess she means at elementary level). Peggy's address is 37 Jewell Road, Ashby, Mass.
We don't know of anyone in the Boston area, but if any of you do, please pass on this notice and Peggy's address.

* * INT'L READING ASSOCIATION * * *
ANNUAL CONVENTION, MAY 4

Learning Literacy through Dialogue Journals"
a symposium on dialogue journal use focusing on reading/writing acquisition across levels.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2-4:45, Convention Center
California B
Stop by even if you can't attend, to say hello.

NEW APPLICATIONS

When we started, our focus was on the use of dialogue journal communication in a self-contained classroom with 'average' students. But many of the 300 or so people who are on our mailing list are at other levels, so we keep learning about new applications. Here are some wonderful ones.

Dialogues with Learning Disabled Students
Roberta Steinberg

Roberta Steinberg, usually known as Keeny, has begun dialogue journals this year with her learning disabled students, who have a variety of problems: emotional, perceptual, auditory processing, mild autism. Keeny's school, Oakwood School in Fairfax County, follows a county Language Arts curriculum which requires students to keep personal journals.

Keeny found, however, that the students wrote 'junk' in their journals. It was just an assignment that they fulfilled as quickly as possible, without thinking at all about the quality of their writing. So this year she began writing and found that the students now feel more accountable for what they write; it must be legible and comprehensible, because they must write for an audience, her. She has noticed a big difference in their dialogue journals this year from those of last year, when she did not write back.

The students write 2 or 3 times a week. They are given time in class (5-15 mins.) and told how many sentences to write (for example, she will tell them to write 3, 4, or 5 sentences that day). Keeny feels that they need that much structure to guide them. If they wrote every day, they wouldn't have anything to say.

Whether there are signs of language improvement or not, the writing is a good outlet for these students' feelings. The students are so eager to read her responses, even though they do not write every day, that they take their journals from her desk to see what she has written, and they sometimes check every day to see if she has written something.

The students write about things they would never talk about in class. One student wrote:

"Sometimes I limp when I walk. I like it at school because no one notices. At home they notice and tease me."

Keeny would have had no idea that Elizabeth felt this way without the journal dialogue.

"Why You Call me Emigrant?"

(excerpts from a forthcoming article in Childhood Education on dialogue journals, by Fran Davis, Coordinator, New Jersey MAP-S project)

As part of a migrant education project funded by the U.S. Office of Education Program, Title I ESEA, we began the use of dialogue-journal writing as a technique for counselor use with students. The project, New Jersey Project MAP-S, was concerned with developing a model for aiding migrant junior and senior high school youth obtain career and occupational information and self-understanding of career goals. The goals of the journal writing were that students would develop greater fluency through writing and reveal through their writings their levels of occupational and career concept understanding.

Our belief was that writing is a process which undergirds and extends the writer's conceptual understanding. Further, that writing developing from the individual's oral language experience first utilizes the expressive mode. The writings in which our migrant students first engaged was personal and expressive in nature. These students then moved, at their own direction, to more referential and sometimes poetic writings. These often involved understandings or misconceptions about migrant status and the occupational world. The writing frequently requested information or clarification of ideas and indicated the attitudes or desires of the students.

Emigrant, cont.

Excerpts from some of their journals illustrate these aspects as well as the mingling of personal and referential writing.

Clarification Request:

S: Why they call is program Education for Emigrant? I believe that this program should have a different name because none of us are emigrant. We have the same rights and priblich the American people have.

Teacher response:

I agree. I also believe this program should be named differently. Migrants do have the same rights and privileges as other American people. However, we found the money for this program under migrant education funding and that is the reason for the name "Migrant". At one time or another most parents of the students in the program migrated from Puerto Rico or some other place to New Jersey to work...

Attitude:

S: I have a job at the auction and we just got new girls working there. I've been working there for almost three years and I feel like I have to compete with the others. I like the type of work I'm doing which is a sales person but, I don't know how to solve my problem. do you think I'm getting bored with the job or I just don't want to compete....The kind of work I see myself doing, well working with people is a very broad subject and it doesn't matter the type of work as long as its helping someone...
It takes me time to write a poem...

Poem

Why is it so hard to be me?
Why do I pretend to be all
The things I see
Why can't I be Free
and let everything inside
come out. is it
Because I'm afraid
I won't be liked for
who I am. is because
they still won't see
me as me. Please
Tell me why I can't
Be me.

Teacher Response:

In solving your problems, you need to begin to take them apart and look at each piece. Are the girls already friends before they came to work? Are the girls excluding you? Do they look down on you?

I know you like to work with people, that in itself will make you less competitive and more caring. But if you get paid to sell, you must sell. Why don't you try talking to them. If you are really bored, maybe you can ask your boss to change your type of work for awhile.

Acually your poem answers your preoccupation about your co-workers and how you feel. It is natural to feel the way you feel now. Just keep on looking and explaining, writing and reading what others write to compare and you'll do alright. The more you understand and like yourself, the less scared you'll be of others disliking you.

Parent -Student-Teacher Dialogues

In the Huntington Public Schools of Long Island, a 4th grade teacher, Cleo Kohn, has created a version of the dialogue journal which involves parents as well as students. Its purpose is to encourage a three-way dialogue, and for Cleo and her students, it really seems to work (although with older students and some younger ones, involving parents in this way would probably prevent many students from complaining and being very open).

From the notes that Carol Hittleman (the curriculum specialist at Huntington Schools) shared with us, we gather that students may keep a personal journal all week, but on Friday morning, they write a letter in their journal to their parents recapping the events of the week. During the school day, Cleo reads the letters and responds to the students' communications. She returns the journals to the students before they go home on Friday. The students take their journal books home to share with their parents.

The parents read the student's

communication as well as the teacher's communication, and then write their responses.

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS:

"I enjoy writing about the things that went on in school. It tells our parents what we do in or out of school. For me it seems like a diary because it feels private."

"I think the green book idea is great. I like writing to my parents and before I take it home Mrs. Kohm writes in it. I like to hear what Mrs. Kohm thinks of my letter. I think the green book is great."

COMMENTS FROM PARENTS:

"We are continually surprised at Kristin's weekly comments. She looks forward to both reading and writing in the book. I'm sure she is trying to inform us of her feelings as well as her activities--and that's so wonderful! We only wish her sisters and brother could have had the benefit of a "green book" experience."

* * *DIALOGUE JOURNAL HANDBOOK * * *

Our handbook on using dialogue journals, promised to be out in January, is in its final draft stage. We think the handbook will be available in some form by fall, but that's a little late for those of you who ordered it already! Most of the delay is due to the authors' slowness at putting it together long distance. All of you on the newsletter mailing list (paid up or not!) will receive notice of its actual publication--we hope you'll be patient.

Leslee's Corner

I just made a presentation to the Rowland School District (part of my work for the UCLA Writing Project). I spoke there last year and had some repeat listeners this year. One had to share an entry in her dialogue journals with our group:

> "Today I had some problems. I was really pest off!"

Having a repeat audience in part was interesting because there were many more questions, most of them like those we are working on for the handbook. I have sent them a copy of our draft and asked them to see if those answers are helpful.

From the LA Times column of Art Seidenbaum, worth sharing for his affirmation of all of us as teachers, (Feb. 27, 1983)

"Just when language looked to be more imperiled than the California Condor, when public education seemed as much a social slippage as skid row...along comes the Eighth Annual Practicum on Teaching Composition, sponsored by the English Council of LA. I saw teachers teaching each other with more mutual respect, glee, fervor than seemed possible in this season of skinflint semesters. Maybe I saw a skewed sample, the magical minority, but there are literate, impassioned people in the classrooms and they remain optimistic, making even me optimistic that the last word is how the word lasts... Leslee Reed of Alexandria Street Elementary School led a session on dialogue journals...what counts is the quality of communication, on paper in privacy... The student has a pen pal as well as a pedagogue, and both have a chance to reason before reacting."

Reader Questions

from Margaret Lewis, Colorado Springs

Q: I would like to know the size of Mrs. R's class(es). Are the comments given here [in the Linguistic Reporter article, Oct. 1981] typical of the length of her daily responses to each student?

Not all students want "a significant, interactive, dynamic relationship with a teacher." What do you suggest doing with them?

A: Mrs. Reed's classes average about 28 students, in a self-contained setting. The brief comments we've often quoted are usually excerpts from a complete daily exchange, which can vary (for 6th graders) from three-sentence exchanges, to rather lengthy multi-page entries. Our rule of thumb is to try to write "about as much" as the student does, but generally teachers tend to focus on the more important topics, and probably don't write quite as much as most students.

Each student has the choice to keep the dialogue on a "safe" level, and for some students, a significant interactive relationship with the teacher never develops. Margaret Crocker, from Halifax, Nova Scotia, in a recent article gave a good answer to this problem, and we quote her:

"But not all students respond enthusiastically, fluently or even in an interesting way to dialogue journals. Often students feel reserved about expressing their personal feelings and merely write dry accounts of recent past events. This is the student's perogative and although the teacher may encourage extension or personal interaction with skillful responses, some students maintain their distance. This can be from a mistrust of teachers or simply because the student does not feel comfortable writing expressively after years of not having the opportunity to do so. For the teacher, such writing may be boring over a long period of time but it makes it all the more important to support the student's writing in a positive manner."

REVIEW OF CURRENT RESEARCH: NEXT ISSUE

Next issue, we plan to review briefly research currently underway or being planned, focusing on dialogue journals. This particularly includes doctoral dissertations, (after all, that's how the original NIE study began, as Jana Staton's dissertation in counseling psychology).

We already have information on the following studies:

A Study of Audience Awareness in Dialogue Journals of Second-Grade Students

Deborah Jaffer,
University of Penn

Dialogue Journal Use in a Required Technical Writing Course for College Juniors (this has a control group design)

Marsha Markman
University of Maryland

Methods of Assessing Reading Development in Dialogue Journals of Deaf Writers

Jana Staton, Bill Stokoe,
Roger Shuy
Gallaudet College

Acquisition of Literacy in a Second Language: Use of Dialogue Journals in Beginning Spanish

Curtis Hayes
University of Texas,
San Antonio

We know there are more research efforts going on out there: if you'll send us a 200-word description of what you're doing, or would like to do, we'll include it. The next issue is likely to emerge about July, so why not send something off now? Be sure to include how others may write or call you for more information.

Volume I, No. 4

Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect St.,N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dialogue

THE NEWSLETTER ABOUT DIALOGUE JOURNALS

August, 1983

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft
Shelley Gutstein

Research Issues: Elusive Definitions

-Shelley Gutstein

In conducting research, one of the first things we do is define our terms such that we can ask pertinent research questions about the subject of our study. Sometimes this is the most difficult task we face as researchers, since often we want to ask questions about concepts which defy precise definition. Fluency is an example of such an elusive concept. We have intuitive notions--something like a prototype--of what fluency means in language learning. We know that we want our students to develop in both spoken and written fluency. But when asked what will help them achieve this, we don't know. Many of us feel that dialogue journals facilitate fluency, but because our definition of fluency is not clear, we cannot show how it happens.

Fillmore (1979) offers a definition of oral fluency which may well transfer to the written medium. According to Fillmore (p. 93), a speaker is fluent in a language if he is able to 1) fill time with talk, 2) talk in coherent, reasoned sentences, 3) have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, and 4) be creative and imaginative in language use. A fluent speaker, therefore, possesses all four of these characteristics.

Since dialogue journal writing exhibits many of the same characteristics as oral language, parallel criteria to those Fillmore suggests for speech might provide clues to the development of fluency in dialogue journal writing. A definition of fluency in this context might be as follows.

First, a fluent writer is one who can write at length with few pauses. This is not to be confused with quantity of writing, since fluent writers can convey their ideas in relatively few sentences. A fluent writer, then, writes easily and quickly. Second, a fluent writer writes in coherent, reasoned sentences. These sentences reflect grammatical accuracy, but more importantly, the semantic and syntactic relationships between the sentences are clear. The writing has meaning. Third, a fluent writer uses language appropriately in a wide range of contexts. This means that the writer knows how to use language purposively in different situations: to inform, evaluate, apologize, offer opinions thank, etc. Studies of this functional nature of dialogue journal writing (Shuy, 1982; Gutstein, 1983ms) have suggested the relationship between functional language use and fluency, however the results are not conclusive. Last, the fluent writer is creative and imaginative in language use.

It might seem that young writers or writers in a second language might not possess the attributes Fillmore outlines. However, there is evidence to suggest that in dialogue journal writing students have many of these attributes, and are acquiring more. Clearly, fluency is not a decontextualized concept. Rather, it is influenced by context and is a dynamic attribute that is achieved as a result of a process of thinking and reasoning.

The lines above represent a first attempt at establishing several criteria for a prototypical definition for written fluency, which our students' writing may more or less resemble. As such, it is surely in need of refinement. Therefore, your comments, insights and suggestions on this topic are most welcome.

Research Issues will be a part of future newsletters, and we'd like to know what other constructs you find "elusive". Please let us know, also, what other topics you would like to see discussed in this portion of DIALOGUE.

(C. Fillmore, Individual Differences in Language Acquisition and Language Behavior. Academic Press, 1979.

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These two studies show how important interaction is for language development.

Young writers in search of an audience

Deborah Jaffer, University of Pennsylvania

James Britton (1975) states that a sense of audience, 'the ability to make adjustments and choices in writing which take account of one's audience,' is a key dimension of development in writing ability. Since adjustment to audience is inherent in all language use, children possess a sense of audience in oral interactions. This knowledge simply needs to be transferred to written communication. A communication dyad, such as the one that exists in dialogue journal writing, may provide the means for making the transfer from informal conversation to the traditional essay writing done in school.

My study examines the role of dialogue journal writing in the development of audience awareness in the writing of 6- to 8-year olds from the first and second grades in a public school in Philadelphia. Examples given here show some ways in which the students showed increasing audience awareness:

Asking questions (Rebecca)
Did you have a husband before I met you. plese tell me.

Giving informative details to make meaning clear (Rebecca)
I will explain it like this. One day the teacher was working with a reading group and the class got so noisy when they were at the book case she told the class that they couldn't go to the book case any more now do you understand?

Showing sensitivity to audience feelings (Sandy)
sory I don't no your parents and now I never will. I am sory that there not liveing. you are to I bet. S O R Y. I L O V E Y O U.

Specifying type of answer desired, to assure accurate information (Michael)
All about me and you. My name is M.J.D. My baithday is Sept. 21 I well be 8 years old. How old are you. Chos the one. 30 34 40 45 29 6 22 26 35 21 52 49 33 if you are not one of them put a x on the one you are the closest to.

It is my belief that because of the supportive immediate feedback that dialogue journal writing provides, these students developed a sense of audience in their writing, and thus they moved from writing that resembled

written down speech to more conventionalized text.
This is excerpted from Deborah's article in The Acquisition of Literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives. Bambi Schieffelin, ed. Ablex. In press.
Deborah Jaffer can be contacted at The University of Pennsylvania.

Back to 'grammar'; what can it tell us?

Joy Kreeft, Georgetown University

What can the study of the acquisition of grammatical structures in ESL students' dialogue journals tell teachers? First, it provides a picture of students' grammatical competence, in the context of natural interaction. This allows teachers to identify problem areas, but also students may surprise us with abilities that would not otherwise appear on tests and class assignments. Second, we can see how the interaction itself provides the opportunity for the use and modeling of a wide variety of structures that may not otherwise be used.

I am studying the acquisition of grammatical structures of six sixth-grade students learning English as a second language, as demonstrated in their dialogue journal writing with Leslee Reed. These students, from four language backgrounds (Korean, Italian, Burmese, Vietnamese/Chinese), had been in the U.S. for less than one year when they entered her class.

Following each student's patterns of acquisition of different structures is exciting and informative. But the question that inevitably comes to mind is, does the dialogue journal writing in any way influence this development? I think that it does. First, Mrs. Reed writes in the journal, too. When a student uses a structure, her reply sometimes models that structure. For example:

Student: Jenny through ball is she is not thought to you...

Teacher: Yes! I know Jenny threw the ball at the first base...

If students are attentive to what Mrs. Reed writes, they incorporate the structures she uses in their own entries. One student, after reading her questions, that almost always began with 'did' ('Did you like our play?'), began all of his questions with 'did,' even when he should have used the present tense ('Did you think we will do art tomorrow?') until he later mastered past and present tense uses.

Continued on p. 3

Back to grammar, cont.

Second, the very act of communicating makes many language demands. This example shows one student's desire to be understood:

> Andy: I like it [Spring festival] because very, very, very and very happy. (Oh! This sentence wrong. I want to tell you "fun" but I forgot so I want change "happy to "fun.")

The more that students attempt to communicate, the more language demands are placed on them, and I am sure that they learn more language in the process.

Joy Kreeft can be reached at: The Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007

D E S I G N S F O R R E S E A R C H

being a discussion of new research: purposes, participants, ways of organizing it, with identification of the scholarly types behind the proposals.

Effects of Dialogue Writing in a College Composition Course

MARSHA MARKMAN is exploring the usefulness of dialogue journals in a required upper division college composition course, in which students are frequently anxious and also ill-prepared for functional writing in their professions. Her design consists of having five colleagues teaching two sections of the same course use the dialogue journals in one section only, thus providing a treatment and control group while controlling for instructor effects. The design will make it possible to attribute differences on outcome measures to the dialogue process.

Since one semester is a brief period to observe change in writing proficiency, the analysis focuses on student attitudes toward the writing process, and the dialogue experience. A content analysis of the journal texts will study how the written communication was used to fulfill individual student needs and to meet course requirements(the teacher's needs!).

Marsha can be reached through the Dept. of English, Univ. of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20472.

Designs for Research, cont.

Acquisition of Literacy in a Second Language: Dialogue Journals in Beginning Spanish Courses.

CURTIS HAYES is examining the acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language, through the use of dialogue journals written in Spanish. Junior and senior high school Spanish classes in San Antonio, Texas provide the setting. Two aspects of this study distinguish it: 1) The language used in the journals is not the language of instruction in the school generally, nor the home language of students. As a result, most of the Spanish learning observed can probably be attributed to in-class activities and the dialogue journal writing; 2) each participating teacher has two Spanish classes, only one of which will use the dialogue journals, permitting comparisons on relevant measures.

--for more information, write Dr. Curtis Hayes, Bicultural-Bilingual Studies, University of Texas-San Antonio.

Language Functions in the Writing of Deaf College Students

JOHN ALBERTINI and BONNIE MEATH-LANG send word from NTID of their project studying the writing of young deaf adults in English class, in dialogue journals and more formal kinds of assigned writing. Using the writing of the same students in the two different contexts, they are comparing language functions and topic choice. Among the common language functions in the journals are suggesting, evaluating, asking about course content, expressing opinions, and requesting personal information of the instructor. A paper on this study will be given at the Fifth Conference on Curriculum Theory and Practice in Dayton, Ohio, in October.

--for more information, write them at Dept. of Communication Research, NTID, Rochester, New York 14623

Topic Analysis in University EFL Dialogue Journals

English language programs for foreign students emphasize academic needs while neglecting important personal 'life' needs. Dialogue journals enable the instructor to take both types of needs

Research Designs, cont.

simultaneously. CHRISTINE MELONI is beginning a study to analyze how concerns of foreign students can be met through the journals. Her research questions include: (1) What topics occur in entries? (2) Can these be categorized? (3)Do certain topics, or categories occur more frequently than others? (4) Can differences in topic occurrence be related to students' sex, culture, level of English proficiency, age, or marital status?

Her journals come from English language students at the George Washington Univ., and she plans a sample representative of male and female, levels of English proficiency(5), and from four geographical areas: Far East, Middle East, Latin America, and Europe.

A small sample of text will be analyzed in order to create a model with categories based on specific criteria, and the model will then be used to analyze the total sample(approximately 60 students).

— for more information, write her at Dept. of English for International Students, George Washington Univ., Washington, DC 20057

Learning to Play the Game

Human communication is something like a game —practicing all the component "skills" doesn't help you to play the game. Only playing the game for real, in actual communication where you have to make all the choices, can do that. For many profoundly deaf students entering Gallaudet College, using written English is a very unfamiliar game, for which they have practiced a lot without many opportunities for meaningful and demanding play.

The Dialogue Journal Project at Gallaudet College has been working with college and high school instructors. This summer, with student and teacher consent, we have copies of 25 full-year dialogue journals and 60 journals kept for one semester, all from English Language Program classes(a prerequisite to Freshman English.

Preliminary analysis of the journals is being conducted by CINDY PUTHOFF(an MSSD instructor), BILL STOKOE(Director, LRL), ROGER SHUY and JANA STATON. Our focus is on the journals as a means of successful communication, which each student(and teacher)plays in a unique way.

Research Issues

1. What encourages students to begin using the dialogue journals more effectively? What does finding a "hot topic" have to do with it?(Many Gally students start by writing repetitive "safe" descriptions of their weekends, and ignore the teacher responses).

2. What language and reasoning abilities unmeasured on regular tests do these students have which the dialogue journals elicit and provide opportunities for using?

3. What teacher response strategies seem to encourage more thoughtful, reflective writing?

4. What relationships occur between acquisition of more complex,mature reasoning and mastery of English grammatical usage?

Our design for the analysis begins with intensive study of the individual year-long journals, kept with the same instructor. We plan in this first 'pass' through the data to describe the variation in patterns of communication, involving such features as topics, language functions, strategies for elaboration, styles of reasoning, clarification strategies. With this understanding , we intend to look next at those journals kept for only the spring semester(as students transfer into a dialogue journal-keeping class from another section). This group of journals represents students with a delayed start, providing a kind of natural control group who have received equal instructional treatment and are matched in length of time in program, but not in journal use.(This allows use of the famous "patched-up design" of Campbell and Stanley).

If these second semester students (new to dialogue journals) have communication patterns at the beginning very unlike their peers who have done it for several months, and very like the patterns of use and change of those same peers at the beginning of the fall semester, we can make a stronger claim that the dialogue journal practice itself is responsible for the patterns of change observed.

We also plan to explore the relationship of frequency of interaction and communication patterns, since among the various instructors the frequency varied naturally from once to three times a week.

-for more information, write to Jana Staton, Linguistics Research Laboratory, Gallaudet College, Wash. D.C. 20002

Leslee's Corner

More and more, I see how important Dialogue Journals are for providing an open channel of communication and a sense of belonging for students! As my school year begins and the roster shows that my students come from several different countries and fifth grade classrooms, my first concern is to give these individuals a sense of self-confidence and a sense of community as soon as possible.

Everything is strange in this new class--the teacher, the other students, even a lot of the activities and procedures are strange and different. Students feel isolated for a while and doubt their own self-worth. It is crucial that by the end of this first day together no one feels left out or isolated and without a friend.

We begin building our friendship with each other at once. We learn first names, we explore our room, and put our possessions in place. Then carefully, slowly, we talk about what we do in this room and why. Toward the end of our first day together I introduce Dialogue Journals. I explain the 'rules,' and possible first day entries, suggested by the students, are written on the board. I tell them that if they can't think of three sentences, they can copy the sentences on the board. Then they write and each journal is placed in my bag, for me to respond to later.

I can hardly wait to get home and connect the names and the writing. Some students have copied three sentences from the board. Are they frightened? lazy? or just unsure? Others have written nearly a page. They tell me many things--they want to be my friend; they liked my explanations that day; they liked the set-up of the room; some are incredulous--'You are going to write to me every day? What if I am absent?' There are also <u>many</u> questions--questions whose answers are necessary for survival in this new place:

"This is a nice class. The teacher is nice. Why didn't they put me in a Korean Bilingual class?" (The records had indicated that she was Vietnamese.)

"If someone says they like you (a boy) do you tell them you like them? I don't know what to do. In my country we don't tell, we sort of keep it a secret."

"What is pa roll? My mother wants to know." (How disturbing to be told that someone is on parole and not know what that means!)

And as I answer, I think, 'There! We've done it again! The Dialogue Journal has opened a door between me and 25 individuals, and like a web, is already pulling us together, even on the first day of school. It's going to be a good year!'

Leslee Reed

FUTURE ISSUES!!!

Our next issues will include:

1. <u>Results from our information questionnaire,</u> (p. 7. this issue). Please share with us your insights and experience. We'll compile the information you send us, and share it back with you.

2. <u>What constitutes a dialogue?</u> What are the necessary conditions? We'll include your comments and observations so please send them. We'll discuss Videologues, and Computer Assisted Dialogues.

3. <u>How do I introduce dialogue journals to my class?</u> What do I tell them the first day?
We'll discuss ways of presenting the journals to your classes, including sample handouts that some of us have used. Be sure to send along your ideas with the questionnaire (Question 2b)

GETTING CONSENT

Not too long ago, we heard from someone who wanted to study dialogue journals and wanted to know if it was really necessary to ask for student and teacher consent: "What if they say no?" Here is our thinking about the issues and problems involved when either the teacher or a third party wants to make some use of the contents of dialogue journals.

1. When is consent necessary? Whose consent do we really need?

Because the journals "work" for both teacher and student only when the contents are private and freed from evaluation, any use of them for data or even for sharing with other teachers in workshops requires the consent of both participants. Even though not legally required, we feel that the consent of students under 18 is ethically required. Of course, parents or guardians and the classroom teacher (if it's someone else) must also be asked for consent. At Gallaudet, instructors are asked to sign the same form as students, and have equal rights to say "no."

2. Do we have to get consent from the students personally? Can young students give informed consent?

This is the exciting part!!--finding a way to explain what we're doing so that even young students will understand the value of sharing some of their conversations with others, particularly other teachers who might be interested in keeping dialogue journals with their students. We've used tape recorders to document student consent when a written form could not be worded simply enough. Not to ask students violates the very reasons we do dialogue journals --if some say no, that's part of the respect for each individual which the journals exemplify.

3. When and how should we ask the students for permission to keep copies of their journals?

Permission should be requested toward the end of the academic year or term in which dialogue journals are being used. Whether you plan to use the journals for research or simply keep them for yourself, you should explain to the students why you want them, keeping explanations very general.

The permission paper the students, teacher and parents (if applicable) sign should reflect your explanation. Here are two excerpts from such permission papers:

a. to the parents of elementary school students:

"We need your permission for your child's work to be reproduced and published so that other teachers may understand just how this process works. We want you to know that your child will not be identified by name in any of the materials, nor will the name of the school or community be used."

b. to university level students and their teacher:

"I understand that my dialogue journal may be one of the journals selected for a research project. The project will study whether these journals help students communicate better with their instructors."

4. Even though we have permission, are there any limits on what we would use?

Even if students give permission to copy their journals, we need to use discretion before we make any passages public. A particular entry may begin with, 'Don't tell anyone about this,' and the student has forgotten. It may be a good idea to ask students, especially adults, to go through their journals and mark passages that should be kept private. After that, a good rule of thumb is, 'If in doubt, don't use it.' Any excerpts that could reveal sensitive information about an individual or that hold a country or any group of people up to ridicule should not be made public.

5. How can we make sure that international students understand that they have freedom to deny access to their journals?

Many international students come from countries where teachers are viewed as all-powerful beings worthy of great deference, whose every wish within the classroom is to be granted without question. Often, students transfer this attitude to their American instructors. As a result, they do not realize nor fully understand that they do have the right to disagree with their teacher, in this case, to deny permission for research on their journals.

Getting consent, cont.

Discussion of consent is therefore best done with these students at the end of the course, when they have had the chance to become acculturated and accustomed to the American teaching style. We must stress to these students that their refusal to give permission in no way will cause any adverse repercussions for them. An alternative may be to ask the students to copy the journals themselves (and reimburse them for the cost). Thus they can delete any pages they wish to remain confidential.

SOME REFLECTIONS -- On Research, Dialogue and Mystery

-Jana Staton

As I reflect on the exciting and unpredictable variety of dialogue journals that have sprung up, and on the excitement I hear from teachers using them, I am puzzled by this continued excitement over a simple, obvious form of human communication. And I grow increasingly uncomfortable about the role of research in relation to this dialogue. (but more of that discomfort later.)

How can such a simple act as reading a few lines of writing, and writing back generate this kind of awe--as if we stood again before mystery? One of the hallmarks of the mystic experience in both Eastern and Western traditions, is the experience of the mysterious invading everyday life. Annie Dillard writes about "the cedar tree with the lights in it," the "great door to the present" that opens from eternity into our daily life, through the simple acts of human experience. Martin Buber writes that the world we know and sense is not separate from the world of eternal things: there is only one world. Only the "barrier of separation" created by our attitudes, our ways of perceiving this one world as twofold, has to be destroyed.

For me, working with this very simple, concrete practice of dialogue journal communication has been a chance to glimpse the tree with lights in it, and to find the barriers of separation in my life of which I was not even aware at first, begin to vanish--the barrier between 'student' and 'teacher', young and old, between 'researcher' and 'practitioner.'

(dotted line)

SURVEY OF DIALOGUE READERS

(Results next issue!)

1. How would you classify your interests in dialogue journals?
   ___as researcher
   ___classroom teacher(incl. college)
   ___teacher educator
   ___other _____

2. If you are using or have used dialogue journals(where you and the student carried on written conversations), please tell us:

   Students: age_____
   background_____
   _____

   Subject area:_____

   When do students write? How often?
   ____assigned class time
   ____free time during class _____
   ____outside of class

3. Your reasons for using?
   _____
   _____

Your reasons for using (cont.)
_____
_____

4. What do you consider the most important values of the journals:
   for you _____
   _____
   for students_____
   _____

5. Any other comments, insights, problems or topics you'd like to have Dialogue address ?
   _____
   _____

6. Do you want to continue receiving the newsletter even if you have to pay for it? _____

   NB: If we are going to continue the newsletter, as we'd like to, we'll need to charge $3.00 per year to cover duplication and mailing.(Make checks payable to Jana Staton).

PLEASE TEAR ON DOTTED LINE AND SEND BACK TO US, BY OCTOBER 15, 1983.

REFLECTIONS, cont.

One major goal of my research has been to develop and articulate a theoretical framework for the dialogue journals, to explain the substantial concepts and assumptions on which they rest, drawing on studies of human communication, language acquisition, counseling theory, literacy and social interaction. But all this heavy baggage for explaining why dialogue communication works doesn't begin to explain the glow I see in teachers' eyes as they talk about their dialogues with their students. And I am becoming very aware of the limits of research for explaining much less predicting what happens when two persons who were strangers become friends through a dialogue. All the descriptions of the structure of discourse and explanations of self-disclosure or causal reasoning won't begin to describe or explain the experience of wonder, every time I know I've been understood by another human being, every time I enlarge my understanding of the immensity of another's mind and spirit, so carefully hidden from me by a socially appropriate "face." Perhaps this wonder is greater because the dialogues work best across those visible human differences we believe are so real and meaningful—age, sex, culture or language.

Carl Rogers in A Way of Being has some thoughts about this experience of mutual understanding which only human dialogue seems able to create fully:

> *I have noticed that the more deeply I hear the meanings (of another), the more there is that happens. Almost always, when a person realizes he has been deeply heard, his eyes moisten...in some real sense he is weeping for joy. It is as though he were saying, "thank God, somebody heard me." In such moments I have the fantasy of a prisoner, tapping out day after day a Morse Code message, "Does anybody hear me? Is anybody there?" And finally one day he hears some faint tappings which spell out 'yes'! In that one simple response, he is released from his loneliness, he has become a human being again.* (1980, p.10)

I use dialogue journals to reach out to others, to turn the keys of their cells and release them through dialogue so that together we can begin learning. Then I notice that I too am released from my cell.

DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who have begun using dialogue journals in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of the National Institute of Education research grant to describe and analyse the purposes, structure and benefits of dialogue journal communication (Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982). For more information about research and practical applications, please write Jana Staton, c/o Center for Applied Linguistics, 3520 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007.

DIALOGUE appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $3.00 to cover duplication and mailing.

DIALOGUE
Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Nonprofit organization
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Permit No. 41429